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Evidence for an Advance on Egypt by Sennacherib in the Campaign of 701-700 B. C.—By STEPHEN LANGDON,
M.A., Fellow in Columbia University, New York.

IN 701 B. C. Sennacherib was called to the West by a serious revolution which had broken out there. A coalition had been formed of all the important cities and states of Western Asia instigated by Shabitoku, second king of the Ethiopian dynasty which was rapidly raising Egypt to a first class power. Shabitoku reigned 703–693 B. C. Within two years after his accession to the throne he had succeeded in forming a coalition against Sennacherib. There were three centers of the coalition, viz., Tyre and Sidon in the north; Jerusalem in the center, and Askalon in the south. The immediate cause of the outbreak was an insurrection of the people in Ekron, a city in the northern part of Philistia. Padi, the faithful vassal of Assyria, was thrown into chains by the rebels and sent to Hezekiah for safe keeping. Sennacherib immediately advanced westward and attacked the cities of the coalition from the north, beginning at Sidon.

The sources for this campaign are:—1. II Ki. xviii, 13. 17–xix, 37; and xviii, 14–16. 2. II Ch. xxxii, 1–21. 3. Taylor, *Inscription of the Annals of Sennacherib*, Col. II, 34–III, 41. 4. Josephus, *Antiquities*, X, 1–23. 5. Herodotus ii, 141. 6. Isaiah xxii, 1–14, and other prophecies, for which see the discussion. 7. Inscription from Nabi Yunus, 13–15.

It is not the purpose of this paper to criticize the extensive literature of these sources. The object is to test the value of each of the sources, and in the light of other information to find out what reconstruction of the history we are warranted in making. The discussion has value chiefly because it throws light upon the work of Isaiah and consequently upon his theology.

According to Sennacherib's inscription the facts are as follows:—In 701 he advanced from the north along the coast and captured all the cities of the coalition, from Sidon to Askalon. He then turned inland and advanced on Ekron. Before he could besiege the city he was compelled to meet the Egyptian army sent by the “kings” of Egypt (so the inscr.), with aid from Ethiopia

(Miluchchi in the inscr.; which Delattre, Tiele and Winckler locate as a small country near Mt. Sinai). The battle took place at Atalku southeast of Ekron in the Wady Sarar near Timnath. The Ethiopians were defeated, after which Sennacherib captured Atalku and Timnath. He then returned to Ekron. After capturing the city and punishing the rebels, he caused Padi to be brought from Jerusalem and to be restored to his throne in Ekron. But Hezekiah still held out. Sennacherib thereupon took forty-six of his cities and confined Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage." Winckler has called attention to the fact that the verb used here is *esēru* "to confine" and not *lamā* "to besiege." The word is used, however, for shutting up and besieging (V 2, 26; 3, 131, and often). Moreover the inscription goes on to say that Sennacherib put bulwarks around the city. Hezekiah was compelled to give 30 talents of gold and 800 of silver, with much other treasure. He also sent tribute to Sennacherib at Nineveh.

The account in II Kings xviii, 13–xix, 37 has been divided by critics since Wellhausen into three sources:—1. xviii, 14–16. 2. xviii, 13. 17–xix, 8. 3. xix, 10–37. xix, 9 is much disputed and is variously treated; see the discussion following. According to xviii, 14–16, Hezekiah sent 30 talents of gold and 300 of silver to Sennacherib at Lakish, a town in the Shaphela southeast of Askalon. He also sent treasures from the temple and palace. This agrees with Sennacherib's inscription, besides giving the information that Sennacherib was besieging Lakish, a town not mentioned by Sennacherib but included in the forty-six towns which he captured. It is not likely that Lakish was besieged, or that Hezekiah sent tribute and spoil before the Egyptian battle at Atalku, or that Padi was given up before the Egyptian army was defeated. It is agreed by all critics that this source is older and more reliable than either of the other two in Kings, mentioned above. It agrees with Sennacherib's account, but was omitted by the compiler of the works of Isaiah, who was careful to omit everything that conflicted with his version of the part which Isaiah played at the time of the invasion of Sennacherib.

II Kings xviii, 13. 17–xix, 8 gives the following account:—Sennacherib sent his Rabshakeh to Jerusalem from Lakish. The king's counsellors came out to meet him by the wall near the

Upper Pool. The Rabshakeh addressed them in a speech ridiculing their dependence on Egypt and their hope that Yahweh would deliver them. For, said he, Hezekiah had offended Yahweh by destroying all the places of worship outside the city and had set up a sanctuary in Jerusalem which was to be the only place of worship. Hezekiah's forces are too weak to resist the great king, besides which Yahweh himself had sent the Assyrian to destroy Judah. Hezekiah's embassy asked the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic, so that the men on the wall might not understand. But he replied by speaking so that all could hear him, threatening them with hunger and famine. He added that they must not trust in Hezekiah, for he is powerless to deliver, nor is Yahweh able to deliver. But the men on the wall and the embassy did not answer, since Hezekiah had forbidden them to do so. The embassy returned to Hezekiah in distress. The king and his whole court put on mourning and sent for Isaiah the prophet, to ask him to intercede for the city with Yahweh. Isaiah sent the answer to the king that Sennacherib should be attacked by a great storm and should hear a great noise and go back to his land to die by the sword. Sennacherib's officer returned to the king and found him besieging Libnah, a town near Lakish. This takes us to chapter xix, 8. Chapter xix, 9a is the verse which has caused most of the discussion among critics, and has led Winckler and Holtzmann to seek for a much later invasion of Sennacherib in order to fit the next account in xix, 9b-37. The verse reads: "And he (Sennacherib) heard of Tarku king of Ethiopia by one who said, 'Lo, he has come up to fight with thee.' "

Chapter xix, 9b-37 gives the following account:—Then he (Sennacherib) sent his officers again to Jerusalem with a letter (read in 9b בְשִׁׁיר and not יְמִשִּׁיר), following the text of Kings and not of Isaiah, against most of the critics. The text of Kings is the original, and on the whole better than that of Isaiah. The discussion will defend this reading against the views of those who hold that xix, 9b-37 is an account parallel to xviii, 13. 17-xix, 8, or that it refers to a later invasion of Sennacherib into Arabia in 690 B. C.). In this letter he urged the people not to trust to Hezekiah, who in fact tells them that the city will not be taken; that no city has been protected by its gods against the Assyrians. When Hezekiah read the letter

he went up to the temple to pray. Isaiah sent him a prophecy (xix, 21-28, written in pentameter) saying that Jerusalem scoffs at Sennacherib for his impudence in boasting that he will destroy Egypt and Judah. Yahweh, however, is the one who wrought all this ruin by the hand of the Assyrian. But now Yahweh will put a hook in his nose and lead him back by the way he came. It should be noted in this prophecy—which, of course, can not be from Isaiah (for, as will appear later, Isaiah never prophesied that the city would not be taken, or that Egypt would not be punished)—that Sennacherib had threatened to invade Egypt. Isaiah goes on to say that the sign that this would come true is that this year they shall eat חַנְןָה ‘the second growth of the grain;’ next year the שִׁיחָה ‘the shoots from the roots of last year’s stalks,’ and the next year they shall plant and eat. This is readily understood to mean that Sennacherib came early in the spring of 701 and destroyed the crops. Therefore, in the year 701 they must live on the aftergrowth of the seeds which fall. He remained devastating the land during the winter and the following summer of 700, therefore they must live on the shoots of the stalks. But since he left before the spring of 699, they could proceed with the usual methods of farming. Judah shall yet have a glorious future. Sennacherib will not enter the city nor besiege it, but will return to Nineveh. On the night that Isaiah uttered this prophecy an angel of Yahweh went out and slew 185,000 Assyrians in the camp before the city. It is now generally held that these two last accounts, one of the sending of the Rabshakeh to Jerusalem, and the other of the letter to Hezekiah, are parallel accounts of the same event.

Chapter xix, 9a tells us that when the Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib at Libnah, a report came from the south concerning an advance by Tarku of Egypt. But it is well established that Tarku did not become king until 692. How, then, says Winckler, could Sennacherib, besieging Libnah in 700, hear of an advance by Tarku, who did not become king until 692? Winckler, therefore, followed by Holtzmann in his Commentary on Kings, thinks that this account of Tarku and the sending of the letter must refer to some later advance of Sennacherib into this region after the accession of Tarku to the throne of Egypt. This he finds in a passage of the inscription of Esarhaddon which refers to an invasion of Arabia by his father Sennacherib in

which the latter took a town Adumu. (Esarhaddon Prism, II, 55.) This is all of the Esarhaddon account; but Winckler thinks, moreover, that for some reason Hezekiah rebelled at this time, for which cause Sennacherib sent him a letter from Arabia and Tarku advanced from Egypt. All this is purely arbitrary.

It is evident at a glance that these two accounts in Kings are written *post eventum* and that the object is to glorify Isaiah. The accounts are self-contradictory and present historical difficulties; for instance, the doing away with the high-places by Hezekiah and the centralization of worship by him in Jerusalem. The mention of Tarku as advancing from Egypt in 700 is not at all surprising in an account so evidently unreliable as II Kings xviii and xix. Winckler's hypothesis is therefore not only built upon an imaginary situation, but the obstacle which caused him to frame his hypothesis is also imaginary. The historical inaccuracies of the post-Exilic period are astounding, and need cause no one to resort to such an imaginary reconstruction of history as Winckler has given in his *Untersuchungen*, pages 26–49. The thesis which I mean to defend in this paper is the following:— Sennacherib, after defeating the Egyptian army at Atalku in 701, laid plans for the conquest of Judah. Hezekiah gave up Padi, who was restored to Ekron. Sennacherib, fearing a second attack from the south by Egypt, upon whom Hezekiah was still relying, sent his Rabshakeh to demand the surrender of Jerusalem and to devastate Judah, while he himself remained in the southern Shaphele to meet any attack from Egypt. Not receiving a favorable reply from Hezekiah, he sent a letter demanding the surrender of the city and the admission of Assyrian troops to the city. This was refused also, but Hezekiah sent heavy tribute to the king at Libnah or Lakish, while the Assyrian detachment under the Rabshakeh began to plunder the outlying districts and finally laid siege to Jerusalem. Suddenly an Egyptian army threatened in the south, and Sennacherib, leaving a detachment to tend to matters in Judah, hastened to the borders of Egypt and laid siege to Pelusium. Here he met with some disaster, and returned to Judah and thence to Nineveh, not stopping to finish the siege of Jerusalem.

We have already discussed two of our sources, viz. the Sennacherib inscription and II Kings; of these only II Kings xviii, 14–16 is absolutely reliable. Sennacherib omits all reference to

Lakish and any advance on Egypt. The inscription of Nabi Yunus confirms the account of Sennacherib's Annals. Our other sources in II Kings we find to be mostly imaginary representations based upon some fact. The facts which these sources seem to warrant us in deducing, are (a) the actual occurrence of the siege of Jerusalem and of Lakish; (b) an advance from the south under some Egyptian king or officer and the sending of an embassy and subsequently a letter from Sennacherib to Hezekiah. The story of the slaughter outside the city and of Isaiah's prophecy ~~must~~ be established by some reliable sources or reasonable circumstances if it is to be taken into account at all. II Chronicles confirms the account of the siege of Jerusalem and the siege of Lakish; it confirms also the embassy from Lakish to Jerusalem and the sending of the letters. The speech of the Rabshakeh in Chronicles is about the same as in Kings. The account of the part taken by Isaiah is short; it simply says that Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed. It confirms the account of the slaughter outside of the city. The genuine prophecies of Isaiah which were delivered during this last period of his life, i. e. during the invasion, are: xxii, 1-18; xxviii, 7-22; xxix, 1-14; xxix, 15-xxx, 1-17; xxxi, 1-3. Chapter xxii, 1-14 was delivered immediately after the army of Sennacherib raised the siege. Whether this was when Sennacherib left for his advance on Egypt, or when he finally returned to Assyria is uncertain, but the tone of the prophecy would lead one to infer that Isaiah expected a quick retribution on the city for its exultation at the temporary raising of the siege (cf. xxii, 14, "This iniquity shall not be covered by aught short of death"). A prose passage is inserted at xxii, 9b-11a which refers to preparations made to sustain a siege, and which is confirmed by II Chronicles. The poem also has frequent references to a siege just past, and mentions breaches in the walls. In view of all this evidence, it is difficult to understand how Winckler can deny the fact of a siege. Certainly Isaiah xxii, 1-14 is first class evidence, backed up by II Chronicles, which on a point like this has certainly some historical value.

In none of the Isaiah sources of this period is there any trace whatsoever of Isaiah's prophecy that the city would not be taken. In Isaiah xxviii, 15 the people are represented as saying: "As to the despoiling scourge, lo it will pass over, it will not come to

pass;" thus referring to the hope that the people still had of help from Egypt. Isaiah replies to this in the following words, xxii, 18 ff.: "As to the despoiling scourge, it will pass over, and ye shall be a trodden thing unto it. As oft as it shall pass over you it shall seize you." In xxix, 6 he adds: "Then it shall fall out suddenly and in a twinkling, thou shalt be visited by Yahweh Sabaoth, with quaking and shaking, and a great uproar, storm and whirlwind, and a flame of consuming fire." He calls Egypt, "Rahab-they are, a sit-still," xxx, 7. But there are no sayings of hope. On the contrary, he says that Egypt, their ally, will be broken, and that the scourge will pass over Judah. The scourge is Sennacherib. We must therefore dismiss all material in II Kings which tries to glorify Isaiah by reporting him to have made the glowing prophecies of the immunity of the city. II Chronicles is much more trustworthy at this point, as it at least does not contradict Isaiah himself. The tradition that Isaiah made such a prophecy arose after the city had escaped a final siege only by accident, since Sennacherib after his retreat from Pelusium had to hasten home owing to complications in Babylon. The idea of the sacred immunity of the city is seen in the line of Jeremiah which is probably a saying of the time handed down from the days when Jerusalem so fortunately escaped a catastrophe: "הַיִּכְלֶל יְהוָה הַיִּכְלֶל יְהוָה הַמֵּה" The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh is this" (Jer. vii, 4).

Josephus differs somewhat from the other sources. He confirms the account of the embassy, but does not mention Lakish. Hezekiah, he says, sent heavy tribute on condition that Sennacherib would go home, but instead he went off warring against Egypt, leaving Rabshakeh to destroy Jerusalem. He then reports the speech made by the Rabshakeh in II Kings, ending with a prophecy by Isaiah which is the same as that reported in II Kings, xix, 6-8. Josephus adds nothing new thus far, except the fact that Sennacherib left a force to finish the campaign in Judah while he went off to Egypt. He omits the account of the return of the Rabshakeh to Lakish. He goes on to report the letter the same as in II Kings, but the letter expressly demands the surrender of the city. This is not according to II Kings. Isaiah is again brought into the account, but the long prophecy ascribed to him in Kings is omitted, and the symbolical descrip-

tion of the failing harvests is turned into a prophecy in which Hezekiah is urged to go about his affairs and let the people plant the fields. Josephus then records the siege of Pelusium by Sennacherib. While besieging the city he heard of the approach of Tarku (*Θαρσίκης*) and retreated in haste. He returned to Jerusalem and took charge of the army. Here the pest-god slew 185,000 men, after which disaster Sennacherib retreated into Assyria. Josephus follows II Kings, but seems to be using independent material not found in any of our other sources. The most important contribution which he makes is the evidence for the advance on Egypt. He also confirms the other evidence in making it clear that if Sennacherib made any advance on Egypt at all it was during the campaign of 701–700.

Herodotus says that Sethon (*Σεθὼν*), a priest king, was ruling Egypt when Sennacherib attacked Pelusium. This is at least some confirmation of Shabitoku, who must have been ruling in Egypt at this time. Herodotus also confirms the siege of Pelusium, and says that mice ruined the armour of the Assyrian army by night, which caused Sennacherib to abandon the siege and retreat. Herodotus states that in his day a statue of Sethon stood in the temple of Hephaestus holding a mouse in his hand and inscribed with this inscription: *ἐς ἐμέ τις δρέων εὐσεβῆς ἔστω.* Herodotus calls Sennacherib “the king of the Arabians and the Assyrians,” which fact is adduced by Winckler as evidence for an Arabian campaign. Finally, we have to add the statement of Berossus, who says that Sennacherib ruled over Asia and Egypt.

All the evidence is now before us. The most trustworthy sources are the prophecies of Isaiah, the old annals used by the late historian of II Kings, and the inscription of Sennacherib. But back of the fanciful histories of Kings, Josephus and Herodotus there must be some facts. The siege of Lakish is confirmed by too much evidence to make it doubtful, and it is not the kind of history which would be fabricated. The fact that the Rabshakeh laid siege to Jerusalem is established by every good source. Only Josephus and Herodotus mention an Egyptian campaign; but the Lakish evidence, and the leaving of affairs to a subordinate when Sennacherib had nothing else to do, are remarkable, while the implication of the prophecy of Isaiah already noticed makes strong evidence for a campaign.

against Egypt. What calamity overtook Sennacherib in the Egyptian campaign is unknown, but it is most certain that the story of the slaughter at Jerusalem is an identification of the misfortune in the south with a traditional account of a catastrophe near Jerusalem. Certainly Sennacherib met with no defeat to weaken his prestige in the West, for Hezekiah not only gave tribute, but sent signs of submission to Sennacherib after the latter had returned to Assyria. Moab and the states east of the Jordan also sent tribute, and the fact that the West gave no more trouble for a century is proof that any account of a fearful catastrophe is a fabrication.

Winckler's hypothesis, so cleverly worked out in his *Untersuchungen*, is improbable if only because based upon untrustworthy evidence in Kings, and is impossible for the reasons given here. Winckler knows of no Arabian expedition by Sennacherib except the accidental mention of the fact in the Annals of Esarhaddon, where it is said that Sennacherib captured Adumu, a city in Arabia. Now Uđumu occurs in Ašurb. V 7, 109, where Edom (**מִדְןָה**) is meant. It is probable that Uđumu and Adumu are identical. In Sennacherib's fifth expedition (Prism, III, 66-IV, 19), which cannot have taken place later than 695, he made a long march over hills and through valleys and encamped at the foot of Mt. Nipur (unknown). After pursuing his foes through forests and narrow passes, he advanced on a town called Ukku, where he ended his campaign. A city on the Persian Gulf or the sea is mentioned by Ashurbanipal, V 9, 122. The city was terribly punished by Ashurbanipal, for it had been continually rebellious, and must have been a place of importance such as would fit the description of Ukku by Sennacherib. The two are probably identical. If, then, this fifth expedition be the Arabian campaign referred to by Esarhaddon, we are not left without an account of such a campaign in the Annals of Sennacherib himself. Indeed, the omission of an expedition of such importance would hardly be made in the Annals. The incident of Esarhaddon's Annals referred to by Winckler is then to be identified with the fifth expedition of Sennacherib. Inasmuch as this occurred before Tarku came to the throne of Egypt, this clue also falls to the ground. It is therefore certain that if we are to accept any account of an advance by Sennacherib on Egypt at all, it is the one mentioned

by Josephus and rendered very probable by circumstantial evidence from the best sources. The simplest explanation of the narrative of II Kings is that the biographer of Isaiah, writing so long after the time of the events, and influenced by the prominent place which Tarku must have held in the subsequent history of the times, carelessly used Tarku's name when the source or tradition which was at the writer's disposal gave no name at all.